

These minutes are submitted by the Community Development Director and are not official until approved by the City of Evansville Economic Development Committee.

City of Evansville **Economic Development Committee**
Monday, December 21, 2020, 6:00 PM
Meeting held virtually

MINUTES

1. **Call to Order** Brooks called meeting to order at 6:00pm

2. **Roll Call:**

	Present/Absent	Others Present
Chair James Brooks	P	Community Development Director Jason Sergeant
Ben Ladick	A	Chamber of Commerce Exec. Dir. Christina Slaback
Vacant	-	Rock County Economic Dev., James Otterstein
Jason Knott	P	
Abbey Barnes	P	
Sue Berg	P	
Brandon Rutz	P	

3. **Motion to Approve Agenda by Berg, seconded by Knott, approved unanimously.**

4. **Motion to waive the reading of the minutes of the November 16, 2020 meeting and approve them as printed by Rutz, seconded by Berg, approved unanimously.**

5. **Civility Reminder**

6. **Citizen Appearances, other than listed agenda items.** None

A. **2020 Rock County Economic Development Challenges and Successes.** Otterstein shared a document with overview information and informed the committee in greater details of efforts in Rock County, including:

- Unemployment rate is going to continue to bounce around, although the local rates have not been released for November, it'll be close to where they are right now. Annual averages are roughly 7.9, 6.9, and 8.4 respectively for a county, state and federal the feds won't change that much.
- Total number of establishments throughout the county regardless of industry and regardless of size continue to increase at about 3,600 businesses today. The beginning of 2021 will start to reveal what impact COVID had.
- Wages continue to increase, at roughly \$1,000/week today, keep in context 2008 to 2007 timeframe right before the recession where things are down. This shows another continue increase, but 2021 will tell more.
- Gross domestic product showed a spike in 2013 and little bit of a drop in 14 but then every year that has increased to about 6.9 million today.
- Sales and Use tax is currently at 14.4 million, with national averages of 14.3% is typically retail sales solely online, assumption is that is the same locally.

- Tourism expenditures is expected to decrease significantly from 2019s \$263.6 Million to 2010 levels if not lower due to an inability to gather socially at the same critical mass that has happened in the past.
- Property Valued continue to increase, currently at \$13.1 Billion
- Residential Building Permit activity continues to rise each and every year, if you look at the activity all the way back to 2000 to 2007 on average during the course of those years saw 570 single family permits each year. Currently they sit at 322 this year.
- Residential Price Points are going up each year since 2012 with an ASP of \$203,124 today. Some concerns are expressed over the price point in lumber prices is really creating a pain for a new homebuyer. Some contractors have cancelled orders based on doubling of lumber costs, because of the costs adding anywhere from \$25-\$40,000 to the final purchase price of a house
- Foreclosure and bankruptcies continue to decrease, but with a freeze on them it is unknown what 2020 looks like.
- Development Pipeline is strong, but slowing to half of usual for 2020 compared to typical. Different industry sectors are seeing a shift, with demand for transportation.

Otterstein asked for any questions and said this information will be finalized in his Q4 report. Slaback shared she spoke with Stoughton Trailers and they're going to be starting in January they're looking for a bunch of jobs to be filled as they reopen. Brooks asked if there is likely to be a quick recovery of unemployment numbers and what occupancy rates are in the industrial parks south of Janesville. Otterstein said recovery will depend on stimulus impacts. Some business owners are having trouble filling positions due to the unemployment enhancements and additions. There is very little vacancy in industrial parks, they are not seeing a rise in vacancies, despite high unemployment. One to Three spec projects are expected in Beloit and Janesville. Brooks reminded Evansville has space available to accommodate industrial users. Otterstein understands and said it is difficult to convince folks were the deeper pockets to get out of their comfort zone of the 39/90 Corridor.

7. Monthly Report

A. Community Development Updates. Sergeant shared his report, including:

Recent and ongoing community development activities:

- Continue working with two site selectors and one existing business on location searches. Both site selectors are looking at redevelopment of existing properties for an expected retail user. The relocating business has shared a new lot has been purchased, but zoning challenges may present themselves.
- Plan Commission had a public hearing on changes to zoning code to allow accessory dwelling units and limit garage frontages. The commission will continue to discuss the ordinance in the coming weeks.
- Historic Preservation selected completed project from the last three years and asked the public to vote for their favorite. 24 E Main, 45 N First, and the Leonard Leota Park Fireplace all received "Preservation Hero" Awards.
- Met with Park Board Members to discuss to discuss priorities a RFP for West Side Park, pool, and splash pad.
- Reviewing detailed AV proposal for Council Chambers

- Working with iWorq to set-up online permitting software, initial implementation for 2020 is pushed back, the technology specialist we are working with has been out of the office due to COVID-19
- Review and approval for Settler's Grove is on hold as concerns over zoning ordinance revisions are discussed.
- Working to schedule a RLF meeting before year end for loan forgiveness
- Working with two business that received building improvement grant awards, but may not have the work finished this year to extend deadlines,

Building Permit Updates:

- 2020 Total to date (Jan through December 15th): 310 permits and \$59,764 in collected permit fees
- 2019 totals (Jan through December): 338 Permits and \$151,861 in collected permit fees (Includes ECSD building improvements and construction)
- 2018 Total to date (Jan through December): 366 permits and \$ 79,549.5 in collected permit fees (Includes Library building improvements and construction)

B. Chamber of Commerce Report – Slaback shared updates including the annual meeting last week. Membership renewals went out last week and response is expected to be good, but ultimately the board will have to see as we get a little bit further into the year, they're not due until the end of December and typically they will still have some coming in January. Chamber is also doing a virtual story via Facebook and YouTube, buddy the elf with the school district is tomorrow. A recent brainstorming session the board made a decision to set goals and evaluate on a quarterly basis, instead of yearly so they can be quicker to adapt to the business community as things change. Membership renewals are offering automatic monthly payments this year to help with those that might not be able to do a big lump sum.

C. Tourism Commission Report: Berg provided her report, including:

- The Evansville Tourism Commission met December 10.
- Recent activity:
 - The Commission sent a request to Municipal Services, via Jason Sergeant, to manage the care / watering of the downtown flower baskets.
 - The social media campaign was postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions affecting gatherings and the hospitality industry.
 - Research continues into the possibility of developing outdoor murals in Evansville.
- Events:
 - Feb. 6 Chocolate Extravaganza
 - Feb. 27 Chili Cook-Off
 - May 7 Cruise Night
 - May 7 Art Crawl
 - Next meeting date for the Evansville Tourism Commission is February 11.

Brooks shared he had an inquiry to start booking bands for Fourth of July.

8. New Business

A. Discussion and Updates on City/Chamber COVID-19 Activities. Sergeant shared the scheduling of a loan forgiveness meeting is coming up. Slaback inquired if the county

heard about WEDC grant awards. Otterstein shared the awards might be going out in January and those who haven't received any in the past were first priority. Otterstein said the state had 46,000 applicants and over 500 rock county companies received funding from the grants earlier this year. Sergeant shared that he researched alcohol licensing and the fees for the reserve license are set by the state. The City Clerk was unaware of any changes that could be made, as the city is consistent with state law.

B. Discussion and Review of *North Allen Creek Redevelopment Plan*. Brooks discussed the North Union Street areas and Bauer House Lot the City owns and asked Sergeant to review the plan this month. Sergeant shared the plan is a few years old, but the information is typical of what would be advised for development adjacent to the downtown. The plan is primarily concerned with the form of those uses, such as building being close to the road and parking lots to the side or rear. The illustration examples show how 155 E Main could be redeveloped and how new construction should look adjacent to the downtown. Andy Phillips, new building and Night Owl are examples of this design. The goal is to redevelop in a way that uses land efficiently and encourages a mix of uses. The plan analyzes and answers a lot of questions that may come up on some of these more unique parcels. A plan like this should be used to answer those questions and not make a decision focused on short term efforts. Brooks added that Union Street is going to be a gateway for a long time and effort should be made to enhance. Otterstein said communities should be flexible and not be stuck in the 1970s. Brooks agreed. The plan is also a compliment to the smart growth plan as a guiding document.

9. Other Business. None

10. Next Meeting Dates: January 18th. 2021 at 6:00pm

11. Motion to Adjourn by Berg, seconded by Rutz. Passed Unanimously.